



United States Attorney District of New Jersey

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 6, 2010

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TWO NEW JERSEY MEN ARRESTED AND CHARGED WITH CONSPIRING TO KILL PERSONS OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES

Defendants Allegedly Intended to Join Designated Foreign Terrorist Organization Al Shabaab

NEWARK, N.J. – Two New Jersey men have been arrested and charged in a federal Criminal Complaint with conspiring to kill, maim, and kidnap persons outside the United States, United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman, Newark Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Special Agent in Charge Michael B. Ward, New York Police Department (NYPD) Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly, and New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (OHSP) Director Charles B. McKenna announced today.

The defendants – United States citizens Mohamed Mahmood Alessa, 20, of North Bergen, New Jersey, and Carlos Eduardo Almonte, 24, of Elmwood Park, New Jersey – were taken into custody at JFK International Airport in New York on Saturday, where they intended to take separate flights to Egypt on their way to Somalia to join designated Foreign Terrorist Organization Al Shabaab and wage violent jihad. Waiting for the defendants at the airport was a law enforcement team holding arrest warrants issued by the United States District Court in Newark.

The defendants are expected to appear on Monday, June 7, 2010, at 11:00 a.m. before United States Magistrate Judge Madeline Cox Arleo in Newark federal court.

According to the Complaint unsealed today:

In October 2006, the FBI received a tip concerning the defendants' activities. As the investigation continued, an NYPD Intelligence Division undercover officer (UC) recorded numerous meetings and conversations with them, during which the defendants discussed and prepared to carry out their plan.

Those preparations included saving thousands of dollars, physically conditioning themselves, engaging in paintball and other tactical training, acquiring military gear and apparel for use overseas, and purchasing airline tickets to Egypt with the intent to then travel to Somalia. The defendants also discussed their obligation to wage violent jihad and at times expressed a willingness to commit acts of violence in the United States. For example:

On November 29, 2009, Alessa stated to Almonte and the UC: "They only fear you when you have a *gun* and when you – when you start killing them, and when you – when you take their

head, and you go like this, and you behead it on camera . . . We'll start doing *killing* here, if I can't do it over there [*Italics indicate translation*].”

The next day, Alessa stated to the UC: “I leave this time, *God Willing*, I never come back. I'll never see this crap hole. Only way I would come back here is if I was in the land of jihad and the *leader* ordered me to come back here and do something here. Ah, I love that.”

On April 25, 2010, Almonte stated that there would soon be American troops in Somalia, which was good because it would not be as gratifying to kill only Africans.

The defendants also watched and played for the undercover officer numerous video and audio recordings that promoted violent jihad, including lectures by Anwar al-Awlaki and videos featuring attacks by Al Shabaab and other terrorist groups.

U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman stated: “This case demonstrates the seriousness with which our Office and our law enforcement partners regard those who seek to join the ranks of violent extremists. When Alessa and Almonte schemed to engage in violent jihad, we were listening. When they attempted to leave the country, we were waiting. We will continue to be vigilant and to protect against terrorism no matter where its adherents intend to do harm.”

Special Agent in Charge Michael B. Ward said, “This case exemplifies the close coordination of resources between the New Jersey JTTF and NYPD Intel. During the course of this investigation, the subjects were confirmed to be committed individuals with operational intent. Their planned travel overseas to link with a Foreign Terrorist Organization precipitated their arrests.”

“I want to commend United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman and his assistants, along with the Newark JTTF and our other Federal and New Jersey partners who worked closely with the NYPD's Intelligence Division in this important case. As in gun trafficking and narcotics investigations, the NYPD cannot acknowledge publicly individual undercover police officers who have infiltrated suspects. Nonetheless, we are indebted to them. Even when individuals plan to support terrorist activity abroad, we remain concerned that once they reach their foreign destinations they may be redirected against targets back home, as we've seen in the past. We are also concerned that should they remain undetected and fail in their foreign aspirations that they might strike domestically, as was discussed as a possibility in this case. The New York City Police Department has long been concerned about the threat posed by individuals radicalized in the United States, and welcomes its emphasis in the President's National Security Strategy published last month,” said Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly.

“The radicalization of our youth, like gang recruitment, is real and continues to pose concerns,” said Director Charles B. McKenna. “We must be vigilant in stopping our young men and women from being co-opted and trained to do us harm.”

If convicted of the charge, the defendants face a maximum potential penalty of life in

prison.

In determining the actual sentence, the judge assigned to the case will consult the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendants' criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence. Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

U.S. Attorney Fishman praised the outstanding work of the FBI and Newark Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), the NYPD, and the New Jersey OHSP in conducting the investigation and apprehension of the defendants. He also thanked the FBI in New York for its assistance in making the arrests. The JTTF is made up of agents and officers of the Department of State, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection, New Jersey State Police, Jersey City Police Department, Bayonne Police Department, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and other law enforcement agencies.

The Government is represented by Assistant United States Attorneys Andrew Kogan and L. Judson Welle of the United States Attorney's Office National Security Unit, and Alamdar S. Hamdani, Trial Attorney, Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department's National Security Division.

The charge and allegations contained in the Complaint are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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